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The nucleus of the collection was formed as a by-product of Mr. Burton's profession as an abstracter, and as the collection grew the business man developed into the historical collector.

He has continued his search for material independent of business for many years until his library rivals the most noted collections of historical societies such as that of Wisconsin.

The collection, although not confined to manuscripts alone for the list of rare books and pamphlets is a very long one, is particularly remarkable for its large volumes of autograph letters, business contracts, and papers of all kinds. Mr. Burton's rule is that of all good collectors; preserve every scrap of paper, for one never knows when it will furnish the connecting link in a historic story.

Mr. Burton with the assistance of his daughter, Miss Agnes Burton, has undertaken at his own risk to make public some of the more important parts of this collection and is issuing regularly in pamphlets of about forty pages annotated transcripts. The first number contains letters from various persons interested in the development of the business of the west, such as Sir William Johnson, Sir Guy Carleton, John Askin, and many traders. They extend over a period from 1754 to 1795. This department is continued in number 2, but the bulk of this later number is made up of "documents on early Indiana history," a department that is continued through numbers 3 and 4. This includes many letters to and from Governor Harrison. The long letter of the latter to the secretary of war, dated March 3, 1805, on Indians is particularly illuminating, but it would take too much space to name all the important documents to be found in these pages.

The transcripts are carefully made and the notes are sufficient to give the reader the necessary information to understand the contents. This enterprise is a notable one and should be supported by a generous number of subscriptions from libraries and individuals.

C. W. ALVORD

*The Life of James J. Hill.* By Joseph Gilpin Pyle. In two volumes. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and company, 1917. 489, 459 p. \$5.00 net)

Those who find their history in the biographies of the great will not look to the lives of presidents and politicians for a record of American development since the civil war. They will look rather to the lives of those "captains of industry" whose clearness of vision made them leaders in the national task of developing a continent, and despots, benevolent or otherwise, in the modern business world. James J. Hill was one of these makers of modern America. It was no mere

coincidence that he and future Lord Strathecona, each driving a dog team, should meet for the first time on the far western prairies, one hundred and forty miles from the nearest house. Each of them had an imagination, described by Mr. Pyle as "tropical," which gave him an insight into the future of the west. Each had the ability — the genius — to lay foundations for the castles of his dreams. It is a favorite task of biographers to analyze this thing called "genius." Mr. Pyle is not a bad psychologist. He delights to show the ability of his hero to make the facts of the past and present cast light upon the future, to grasp and retain unlimited detail, to work incessantly without breaking, to wait as patiently as he labored for the favorable moment, to be honest, broad-minded, patriotic through it all. But granting that these things for the most part are true, the reader grows a bit weary of their endless repetition, and can but reflect that in another age our author would have been an able contributor to the *Acta Sanctorum*.

The author's fondness for character analysis does not alter the fact that these two volumes are a substantial addition to our knowledge of transportation development in the northwest, and are distinctly worth while. Mr. Pyle has drawn freely upon the letters and papers of Mr. Hill, and has supplemented this information by means of private conversations with him and with his associates, by careful examination of the numerous court records which have opened so freely the archives of great corporations, by a first-hand acquaintance with newspaper files, and with such an historical background as the professional journalist is wont to acquire. He has traced with painstaking care and accuracy the stages by which the Hill interests grew from an idea into the gigantic system which they now are. His superior sources of information and his industry in using them enable him to shed new light all along the way. In view of the real merit of his work we can afford to bear with him while he argues for the benefit of a past generation that the consolidations of which he treats were not the outgrowth of "some Machiavellian scheme," but the result rather of the "irresistible forces of railway evolution." Admitted. But if these same "irresistible forces" should move on through federal control to ultimate government ownership, we shall hope that Mr. Hill was not correct in predicting as a result "the end of this country as a free and democratic government" (2:280).

It is remarkable in a work upon which obviously so few pains have been spared that there should be no maps to guide the reader through the maze of railway constructions and connections so constantly alluded to. But the facility with which Mr. Pyle handles twentieth-century English does much to overcome this difficulty. It is not easy to thread

one's way through "the tangled web" of railway finance, but the author's statements are never obscure. Occasionally his figures of speech are a bit rampant, but they are usually effective; as, for example, when he describes the Hill system as "a giant cornucopia whose body extends from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River, contracts as it stretches west and northwest, and pours its contents through the relatively narrow orifice of Puget Sound and Portland" (2:57). His use of the English method of spelling such words as "favour," "labour," and "honour" contrasts somewhat oddly with the screaming Americanisms which appear on every page. But he commands attention. Possibly if professional historians would cultivate a more interesting style, their services as authorized biographers would be more in demand. Until such a time it ill becomes them to criticise too freely a work which they will have frequent occasion to use.

JOHN D. HICKS

*George Caleb Bingham, the Missouri artist.* By Fern Helen Rusk, Ph. D., assistant in classical archaeology and the history of art, University of Missouri. (Jefferson City, Missouri: Hugh Stephens company, 1917. 135 p. \$1.50)

This book is a study of the character and achievements of the artist whose name it bears. He was a man of absolute sincerity and fearlessness, who delineated with typical truthfulness the life of the Missouri frontiersman in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Bingham stands as an unique character in early American art history. Of Scotch-German parentage, he migrated, when but a child, to Missouri, where, we are told, traces of his childish drawings are "still quite plainly outlined on pump, fence and outbuildings." At first, primitive conditions compelled him to use as pigments brick dust, axle grease, dyes, and even his own blood.

In addition to his duties as a citizen, including the occupational pursuits and political welfare of the growing state, he continued his self-education as a painter. We find him hard at work, developing his earlier efforts in portraiture into more ambitious compositions of the animated and vivid human life with which he was surrounded.

Modern critical judgment might regard many of these paintings as theatrical and formal. But while lacking the spontaneity and freedom of more modern treatment, if gauged by the contemporary and stereotyped art forms of that time, they stand as invaluable records of realistic and exact work.

Ranging from portraits of men and women famous in Missouri and national life and a few landscapes, the paintings included the occupa-